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REMARKS

OF
MR. TRUMAN SMITH, OF CONN.,

ON

THE IMPUTATIONS OF N. B. BLUNT, Esq., OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK, ON HIS
COURSE AS A DELEGATE TO THE RECENT

WHIG NATIONAL CONVENTION,

TOGETHER

*With an exposition of the benefits which will result to the Country from
the elevation of*

GEN. ZACHARY TAYLOR

TO THE

PRESIDENCY OF THE UNITED STATES.

TO THE PUBLIC.

I perceive from a report in some of the New York papers of the proceedings of a meeting of the Whigs of that city, convened in the Park, on the 16th instant, N. B. Blunt, esq., (one of the delegates to the recent Convention at Philadelphia,) took the liberty of introducing my humble name to the consideration of the meeting, accompanied with the imputation of a want of fidelity on my part, as a member of the same Convention, to the trust reposed in me by the Whigs of Connecticut. In one of the papers alluded to, Mr. Blunt is reported as follows: "Look at your sister of Connecticut. One of her delegates, who has filled high office in her gift, and who is about to enter upon a still more exalted position before the nation, was *elected and instructed to cast his vote for Henry Clay*. He came into that Convention with the name of Henry Clay on his lips, but with all his energies predetermined to defeat him. This, fellow citizens, was his conduct, and though I have no personal injuries to redress, I feel that I have a right 'to hold the mirror up to nature' to say whether this man deserves well at the hands of his constituents." It has ever been with me a rule not to take any notice of scandal or abuse from whatever quarter it may come, as I am of the opinion, that a public man had better live down all such attacks, and if he has not character enough to do so, he should seek immunity therefrom in retirement and obscurity. If I make the present case an exception to that rule, it will not be on personal grounds—it will not be because I have the slightest idea that there is any occasion to vindicate myself before the Whigs of Connecticut, but because such charges tend to bring the Convention itself into disrepute, the proceedings of which were, as I think, characterized throughout by a spirit of fairness, moderation, impartiality, and rectitude. I have not the honor of a personal acquaintance with Mr. Blunt, but I am free to confess, that all I have learned of his standing as an eminent lawyer, and of his character as a good reliable Whig, has been adapted to inspire me with respect. I do not therefore desire, and shall not enter into any controversy with him, but shall content myself

with stating plainly the facts of the case, and shall leave him to repent at his leisure of the injustice which he has done to a fellow member of the Convention, who claims no other position than that of being his equal, with the right to consult his own sense of duty, and to be guided by his own convictions of what (in the very difficult and trying circumstances in which the Convention was placed) was best adapted to promote the good of the country and the success of the Whig party. In answer to the uncereceremonious and unwarrantable use which has been made of my name, and to imputations from whatever quarter they may come, I submit the following remarks :

1. It is not true, as alleged by Mr. Blunt, that I was elected to the Convention and instructed to vote for Henry Clay; I was a member of the State Convention which convened in New Haven last fall, and which appointed the delegation to the National Convention, consisting of Messrs. Rockwell, Stuart, Babcock, Trumbull, White, and myself, and no instructions whatever were given to the delegation. It is not the practice of the Whigs of Connecticut to commit their delegates in advance; but it is, and ever has been, expected and desired that they should go into the National Convention untrammelled and prepared to enter into a full and free consultation with their brethren from other sections of the Union, and then do what they shall think just and right under all the circumstances of the case. Such is my sense of the evils of a packed convention, I would not accept of a seat in such a body instructed to vote for any man.

2. It is not true that I went into the Convention with the name of "Henry Clay on my lips, but with all my energies pre-determined to defeat him." On the contrary, I was well assured, from all I knew of the composition of that body, that he would in no event get a nomination. I was, in fact, desirous that he should receive as large a vote as possible as an expression of the high appreciation of his talents and public services which all good Whigs entertain, and as an alleviation in some degree of a result adverse to his claims which I considered inevitable. I even now regret that the Kentucky delegation did not feel it to be their duty to cast a unanimous vote in his favor, for reasons that must be obvious. But "all my energies were pre-determined" to ensure the nomination of Gen. Taylor, as between him and some other candidates, not because I did not entertain the utmost respect for such candidates, but simply because I thought we should best subserve the interests of the country by putting forward, in the present conjuncture, the name of Gen. Taylor. When I speak of other candidates, I must not be understood to refer to Mr. Webster, of whom, permit me to say, that the people of the U. States would have honored themselves, and have rendered our free institutions illustrious, if they had made him President long ago. It is true the name of Henry Clay has often been on my lips, but it has ever been in accents of praise and admiration; such was the fact in 1844, when I devoted almost an entire year in co-operation with friends to rescuing our Commonwealth from the hands of the opponent, and in giving him the electoral vote of Connecticut. I claim to be a much truer friend of Mr. Clay than those who have so unadvisedly urged him into the field when there was little probability that he could be nominated, and less that he could be elected if nominated.

3. It is well known here, and I believe throughout Connecticut, that having given the entire subject a full and a most anxious consideration, I early in the present session came to the conclusion that we could with more certainty put down the present Administration, and promote the success of the Whig cause, under the auspices of Gen. Taylor, than by using the name of any other of the distinguished men who have been brought before the public in this connection. Nevertheless, I have said on all occasions that I would not, as a delegate to the Convention, act on my own private opinions, but would co-operate with the other delegates from Connecticut in an effort to obtain such a result as we might, on consultation, deem to be best.

4. When the delegation assembled at Philadelphia for consultation, in advance of the deliberations of the Convention, my opinions favorable to General Taylor, and the grounds on which those opinions are based were fully stated to my co-delegates; but, at the same time, I avowed the purpose of abiding by the decision of

my associates. We then determined unanimously to vote for Mr. Clay; and I can assure Mr. Blunt that we should not have departed from that determination one hair, if other delegates had been disposed to co-operate with us, so as to give Mr. Clay a majority of the Convention; in such case he would have been the nominee of the Whig party, and I would have exerted myself, as in 1844, to make him the Chief Magistrate of the American people.

5. On the first ballot Mr. Clay received 97 votes, (fewer, by far, than I anticipated,) and on the second he receded to 86. The delegation assembled the next morning for further consultation; and knowing, as we did, that many delegates who voted for Mr. Clay on the first and second ballots would vote for other candidates on the third, and that therefore his nomination was unattainable, we decided unanimously that each delegate might thereafter give such a vote as he should be convinced the good of the country required. I then recurred, for the first time, to my real opinions, and voted for General Zachary Taylor, and found myself supported by two of my colleagues, Messrs. Stuart and Trumbull, who acted on their own judgment, wholly uninfluenced by me, directly or indirectly. I presume I shall not be guilty of a breach of confidence if I say that General Taylor would have received, if necessary to his nomination, (Mr. Clay being out of the question,) two more votes from Connecticut. I believe the same thing is true of some delegates from other States who voted for Mr. Clay to the last.

6. I entertain the utmost respect for, and confidence in, the Whigs of the city of New York; but it must be recollected that I went into the Convention not as their agent, but as the representative of the Whigs of Connecticut. I thought myself a free man, acting for the free Whigs of a noble State, in a perfectly free National Convention, with no obligations to Mr. Blunt except those of courtesy and respect. In that character I did not deem myself a mere automaton, but a reasonable being, in duty bound to act fairly and candidly towards all, but with liberty to exercise an honest judgment as to the best means to be selected to accomplish an object which all good Whigs desire. I am supported in the course which I pursued by conscious rectitude; and through "evil report and good report" I shall pursue "the even tenor of my way," paying no more attention to denunciation, from whatever quarter it may come, than I would to "the idle wind." I am not at all apprehensive of having incurred the resentment, either of Mr. Clay or my own constituents. I know too much of that magnanimous and noble-hearted man to believe that he will harbor a particle of ill will towards such of the Convention as fearlessly did what they believed to be their duty, whatever he may think of those who have "gambled" with his name—of which, by the way, I do not suspect Mr. Blunt. As to my constituents, I feel myself under infinite obligations to them. I have received many expressions of confidence at their hands, and recently one which nearly touches my heart. But I can assure Mr. B. we can settle accounts between ourselves without his aid or interference; and further, that whenever it shall appear that I have incurred their displeasure, I shall instantly return into their hands any trust which they may have confided to me, and take refuge from the misconstructions and malevolence of politics in the duties of my profession and the repose of private life. I hope Mr. B. will excuse me for intimating that, if certain Whigs of the city of New York were less in the habit of maligning the motives and traducing the conduct of the Whigs of other parts of the country, they would have more influence in giving a direction to public affairs.

From this exposition, I think, it is manifest that Mr. Blunt, "in holding the mirror up to nature," has placed it in false lights, and has reflected a distorted image; and, in view of the facts stated, I fearlessly submit my course in the Convention to the scrutiny of all honorable and upright men. I have acted openly and above board on all occasions in reference to this subject, and avoiding ultraism and violence, on the one hand, I hope my conduct, on the other, has been characterized by the independence and firmness which all should possess who desire to be of any use to the country.

Dismissing, then, this subject, which I shall not be surprised to find regarded as

of little moment, I seize the occasion to give a brief exposition of the benefits which I conceive will result to the country from the elevation of General Zachary Taylor to the Presidency. I anticipate from such a consummation—

1. An essential alleviation of the acerbity and violence of party spirit which has been running to extremes for many years past, and which has produced nothing but evil to the country, and that continually.

2. A more moderate and reasonable action on the part, both of Congress and the Executive, in establishing a policy in reference to all essential interests, in which all good men, if not perfectly satisfied, can acquiesce. I wish to see public men disenthralled, in some degree, from the iron rule of party, and placed in a condition to act freely according to their own conscientious convictions of right and duty. Time was when leading men of the same party felt themselves at liberty to differ on great questions of public policy, but now the state of the case is widely different, and many are forced, by the tyranny of party, into the support of measures which they cordially disapprove, if they do not detest. Relentless proscription awaits every man who falters in the least. I have, within the last few days, heard an upright and truly patriotic Senator, from my own State, bitterly denounced by a leading Democratic member of the House of Representatives, merely because he will not go the whole figure in supporting all the wild and mischievous measures of the present Administration. The state of things, which has long existed at the seat of Government, I can sufficiently illustrate by an anecdote: At the time the final vote was taken in the House, at the first session of the last Congress, re-enacting the Subtreasury law, a highly respectable Democratic member came across the Hall to my seat, and exclaimed, with an oath, (which I will not repeat,) "it is a shame that a law should be passed to which a large majority of the House is opposed," or words to that effect. I am confident that, had it not been for "the bonds of party," the tariff of '46 could not have been passed, though that of '42 might have been essentially, and perhaps advantageously, modified. I am equally confident that, but for the same cause, the country would not have been plunged into "an unnecessary and unconstitutional war with Mexico," the past and present evils whereof few yet comprehend, and the future evils of which will only be taught us by many years of bitter experience. But when moderation shall become the order of the day, which I am well assured will be inculcated by Gen. Taylor, should he be President, by both precept and example, a new spirit will come over Congress, and I trust the great body of the people, and we shall all feel that we have common institutions to preserve, a common country to serve; and, whether we sink or swim, we are all committed to one common destiny, whether for good or evil.

3. An administration which will consecrate all its faculties to the preservation of the peace of the country. I regard this as an object of paramount importance. No man is better qualified than Gen. Taylor to seize with a firm grasp the spirit of war which unhappily infests the American people, (the great besetting sin of all republics,) and to hold it effectually in check. That he entertains sentiments of the utmost abhorrence of war, and that he will be the resolute friend of peace I know. I hope I shall be excused for presenting here an extract from a letter which I had the honor to receive from Gen. Taylor, dated at Baton Rouge, on the 4th of March last:

"I need hardly reply to your concluding inquiry that I am a peace man, and that I deem a state of peace to be absolutely necessary to the proper and healthful action of our republican institutions. On this important question I freely confess myself to be the unqualified advocate of the principles so often laid down by the Father of his Country, and so urgently recommended by him in his Farewell Address to the American people. Indeed I think I may safely say that no man can put a more implicit faith than I do in the wisdom of his advice when he urged upon us—the propriety of always standing upon our 'own soil.'"

In his letter to Captain J. S. Allison, dated April 22d, General Taylor says:

"My life has been devoted to arms, yet I look upon war, at all times and under all circumstances, as a national calamity to be avoided, if compatible with national honor. The principles of our Government, as well as its true policy, are opposed to the subjugation of other nations, and the dismemberment of other countries by conquest."

At a dinner in New Orleans, given in December last in honor of Gen. TAYLOR, he responded to a complimentary sentiment by declaring—

"That the joy and exultation of the greatest victories were always, after the heat and excitement of the battle, succeeded by feelings of poignant sorrow and pain; and that roar, after all, was a great calamity, and his the greatest glory who could terminate it."

General Taylor has on other occasions avowed similar sentiments; they do him much honor. He will resist the lust of dominion and the passion for acquisition which marks so distinctly the character of the American people, and which is fraught with more peril to our free institutions, and the perpetuity of our glorious Union, than any other cause whatever. There will be no danger of the annexation of either Cuba or Yucatan under the auspices of Gen. Taylor.

4. Also an administration of the strictest impartiality, and of the most rigid justice, as between all the great interests of the country, and all sections of the confederacy. I believe Gen. Taylor to be entirely above sectional prejudice; and there are not any of the interests of the free States which I would not unhesitatingly confide to his hand. He has a head to comprehend, and a heart to embrace his country, and his whole country. Having spent his whole life in the public service, and on terms of cordial and friendly intercourse with the people of all parts of the Union, he entertains the broadest and most liberal sentiments of nationality. I do not regard him as a citizen of Louisiana, but as a citizen of the United States of America.

5. He will do much, if elected, to put down the efforts now making in various quarters to run all the politics of the country into a mischievous spirit of sectionalism. If he shall prove to be the President I doubt not he will be, the people will learn, that of all the qualifications for that high office, that of citizenship, residence, or domicile, is the lowest. I am more disposed to look to the man himself, to the qualities of his head and heart, rather than to the accidents of birth or residence. Who would not rejoice to have a succession of Presidents for the next five centuries, who shall administer the Government after the fashion, and in the spirit of Washington, though every one of them should come from the Capes of Florida.

6. Congress will be restored to the powers and prerogatives which the framers of the Constitution intended that body should exercise. It must be obvious, on the slightest examination of that instrument, that to Congress was confided the power of expressing the will of the people in the form of laws, and to the Executive the duty only of executing that will when ascertained by Congress. But within the last few years there has been in progress a rapid concentration of all power in the hands of the Executive. The President has become everything and Congress nothing. An irresponsible body, called a convention, and generally a small committee of such body assembled in the upper room of some tavern, have arrogated the right of settling every thing in advance, and of binding both Congress and the Executive. The latter has become the agent of a debased and grovelling partizanship to overrule the former, either through the instrumentality of the veto, or by a corrupt exercise of patronage. To the correction of the enormous evils of "the one man power," General Taylor stands distinctly pledged. The moment this is done, the great questions of public policy are taken out of the Presidential canvass and are carried into the Congressional districts. If the people desire a protective tariff, the improvement of our harbors and rivers, or any policy in regard to our territories, they will elect members of Congress accordingly. This will relieve the legislation of the country from the malign influence of party, and will be likely to give much greater stability to such measures as have a favorable bearing on the important interests of the country, than has obtained for many years past.

7. The influence of the name and character of General Taylor will be quite certain to give us a Congress whose views of public policy will accord with those of the Whig party. In this respect he can do more for the country than any man now living. Few of those who undertake to pronounce so peremptorily on the question of the Presidency have given this subject any consideration whatever. While I am free to admit that Mr. Clay ought to have been elected President long ago, yet I

think it certain that if he could now be brought successfully into the field, he would have the two Houses of Congress to thwart and embarrass him during the whole of his Presidential term. Any man who will consider the condition of the representation in both branches of Congress from the northwestern, western, and southwestern States, must admit the truth of this remark. I want a Whig President, a Whig Senate, and a Whig House of Representatives, and General Taylor being strong in those parts of the Union where we are weak, will favor in a high degree so desirable a consummation.

8. In short, I believe that all departments of the Government will become conservative under the auspices of General Taylor. That he will administer the Executive department in that spirit no man can doubt; and this makes him a good Whig enough for me. He will take high conservative ground on all questions appertaining to our foreign relations. He will dispense the patronage of the Government in a spirit of moderation. He will be particularly cautious to see that justice is done to all sections in this regard. And as to questions appertaining to our domestic policy, he will follow the example of the earlier Presidents, and will throw them into Congress. What more can be desired by the just, moderate, and patriotic of the Whig party?

I doubt whether there has ever been assembled in this country a Convention, the proceedings of which were more just and fair, and in which there was less of management and intrigue than that which recently assembled at Philadelphia. It was refreshing to meet from the farthest extremity of our wide spread Union good and true hearted Whigs, who had incurred the fatigue and the expense of a journey of many hundred miles to participate in our consultations. All seemed to be actuated by the best spirit, and anxious for the success of the common cause. It is true there were strong differences of opinion among the members, honestly entertained and respectfully and kindly expressed, and these differences were submitted to the proper arbiter voluntarily constituted and pre-eminently worthy of the confidence of all. The result was the nomination of General Zachary Taylor as the Whig candidate for the Presidency, and by the blessing of God he will be elected, whoever may bolt the track.

I accord fully in the opinions recently expressed by the Hon. C. C. Cambreleng in a political assembly, as follows:

"The great object of the wise men of the capital, for three years past, has been to make a President. They have labored day and night, zealously and assiduously, and have succeeded admirably and triumphantly. They have most effectually accomplished their object; they have, by their own acts, made a President of the United States, but it happens not to be the man, nor either of the men, they intended. It is neither the President nor any of his Cabinet, nor is it the conservative nominee of the Baltimore Convention. From the first roll of the drum at Palo Alto, through all our splendid victories, to the final and glorious conquest of Mexico, the President and his Cabinet have labored, zealously and successfully labored, to make Zachary Taylor President of the United States. It matters not whether he is from the North, the South, the East, or the West, nor how he gets into the field. Whether supported by volunteers or regulars, once in the field, *the man who has the heart of the nation with him is irresistible, and must inevitably triumph.*"

And why should it not be so, when the real issue to which we are brought is whether Lewis Cass or Zachary Taylor shall be the next President of the United States? I desire to say nothing disrespectful of General Cass, but his career in Congress, particularly on the Oregon question and the Mexican war, are too well known to render mistake possible as to what will be the tendency of an administration of which he shall be the chief. Unfortunately he is one of those who think they can find an inexhaustible fund or source of popularity in the belligerent propensities of the American People. War! war! has been incessantly on his lips for years past. I trust that Whigs everywhere will ponder well on the consequences which resulted from third party organization in 1844. Did it not elect Mr. Polk, overthrow the Tariff of '42, re-enact an odious and oppressive Sub-treasury, annex Texas, involve us in the war with Mexico, commit twenty-five thousand American citizens to a premature grave, and squander over one hundred and fifty millions of the public treasure? Does not a large share of the responsibility

of all these evils lie at the door of those who, by a third party movement, defeated Mr. Clay? Whoever takes a similar course now, will incur dread responsibilities. What if war again should follow from it—the annexation of Cuba or indefinite extension on the side of Mexico? I cannot believe that any such suicidal policy will be pursued. No! the hour of retribution has come, and those who have been gambling with war in reference to the Presidency, will find themselves put down by a man who by his noble conduct and brilliant exploits has raised himself to the level of the most eminent commanders of modern times. Let us now elect Gen. Taylor President, and aspirants for that high office will be little inclined hereafter “to make of war and its bloody front a game of politics.”

I declare my utmost confidence in General Taylor. I feel that I have a thorough insight into his principles and his character. As he is an honest man, I confide in him; as he is a moderate man, I respect him; as he is a humane man, I admire him; as he is a man of unsurpassed bravery, I honor him; as he is distinguished for good sense and sound discretion, I think he will make a safe President; as a high sense of justice has ever characterized his conduct, I am willing to trust him with the rights and interests of all parts of the country, and particularly those of the free States; as he has ever been remarkable for firmness and decision of character—“asks no favors and fears no responsibility”—I believe he will, with a steady hand, guide the country safely through all the perils which may environ it; as he possesses the utmost purity and excellence of character, I shall take pleasure in seeing him at the head of public affairs; as he is truly republican in his habits and manners, being one of the people, and sympathizing thoroughly with the masses, I think there is a fitness in making him the chief magistrate of those same masses, of whom the humblest can exclaim with truth, “he is one of us!”—and as he is a good, sound, conservative, and reliable Whig, abominating war and contemning meanness, fraud, chicanery, and trickery, who will put far from him all evil-doers, political or otherwise, I am for him from the beginning to the end of the chapter. I consecrate my hand and my heart to the good old cause as represented by Zachary Taylor, and will do all within the range of my feeble abilities to make him the next President of the United States.

TRUMAN SMITH.

Washington, June 20th, 1848.



Since penning the foregoing remarks I have received the following communication from his Excellency Clarke Bissell, the Governor of our State, his Honor Charles J. McCurdy, the Lieutenant Governor thereof, Hon. L. F. S. Foster, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and John B. Robertson, Esq., Secretary of the Commonwealth. I need not say that the contents have afforded me unalloyed satisfaction:

NEW HAVEN, *June 19th*, 1848.

Hon. TRUMAN SMITH—

DEAR SIR: As there appears a disposition in certain quarters to impugn your course as one of the delegates of Connecticut at the Philadelphia Convention, we deem it a duty, and feel it a pleasure, to express to you our views on the subject.

Mr. Clay was, undoubtedly, the first choice of a large proportion of the Whigs of Connecticut; and a class of them, good men and true, and faithful to the end, were, to the last, earnest and anxious for his nomination, and willing to abide the chance of its success. But another portion, perhaps as numerous, as respectable, and as judicious, with the same attachment to the person and principles of their noble leader, had become, at the time of the nomination, unwilling to commit the *cause* to the hazard of so doubtful an experiment. They were also afraid that, even if the nomination was successful, it would be but a barren victory, not producing that effect upon the Congressional elections which is necessary to ensure a practical and substantial triumph. This state of feeling and opinion at home, the first wish and the ultimate doubt, was fairly reflected by the course of our delegation at Philadelphia. They were under no instructions, (*advice* enough they unquestionably had,) but each member was expected and desired to exercise his own discretion in view of all the circumstances which should be developed at the Convention; and their friends here were willing to trust the entire subject to the prudence and wisdom of their decision. As far as we know, their course is entirely satisfactory to the great mass of the Whigs of Connecticut. The nominations are responded to with enthusiasm, and will receive at least as large a majority as any which could have been made.

With much respect, we are your friends,

C. BISSELL,
CHAS. J. McCURDY,
L. F. S. FOSTER,
JOHN B. ROBERTSON.

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